DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 379 136 RC 019 991

| | |
|---|---|
| TITLE | Study of Special Populations: Native American Students with Disabilities. Chapter 7. |
| INSTITUTION | Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (ED), Washington, DC. Div. of Innovation and Development. |
| PUB DATE | 94 |
| NOTE | 44p.; In: Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Sixteenth Annual Report to Congress; see ED 373 531. |
| PUB TYPE | Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC02 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *American Indian Education; Delivery Systems; *Disabilities; *Disadvantaged; Elementary Secondary Education; *Federal Programs; Higher Education; Preschool Education; Public Schools; *Special Education; Teacher Education; Teacher Shortage |
| IDENTIFIERS | Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools; *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; *Native Americans |

ABSTRACT

As one of a series of papers on the unique needs of special populations with disabilities, this chapter of the 16th annual report on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reviews the literature on provision of services to Native American students with disabilities. Native American students with disabilities frequently have other characteristics that complicate service delivery, including poverty, residence on reservations or in other rural areas where services and resources are limited, limited proficiency in standard American English, and cultural differences that affect schooling. The first major section of this report describes numbers and characteristics of Native American students with disabilities, including preschoolers and school-aged children in public and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. The second section outlines educational programs for all Native American students and those that specifically target Native Americans with disabilities, and describes funding of special education services under part B and part H of IDEA. Section 3 discusses the provision of appropriate special education services for Native American students within the framework specified by IDEA. Major areas discussed include identification and assessment, student placement, linguistic and cultural issues in curriculum development and instruction, and recruitment and training of personnel (particularly Native American personnel). This report contains 46 references. (SV)

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ED 379 136

Study of Special Populations: Native American students with Disabilities. Chapter 7.

# TO ASSURE THE FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION OF ALL CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 618*

## Sixteenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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# CHAPTER 7

## STUDY OF SPECIAL POPULATIONS NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, 1.9 million Americans, or approximately 0.8 percent of the general population, claimed Native American status. More than 5 million additional individuals indicated that they were of Native American descent, but did not claim "American Indian" as their ethnic identity (Bureau of the Census, 1990; Hodgkinson, 1992). Approximately 637,000 Native Americans are reported as living on Federally recognized reservations or trust lands, with more than 252,000 additional Native American individuals living in cities. The remaining number live in rural or suburban areas outside Federal reservations (Bureau of the Census, 1990).[1]

Native Americans may comprise a small proportion of the U.S. population, but they represent a significant presence in several States and metropolitan areas. Half of the Native American population is concentrated in six States (Oklahoma, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Alaska and Washington). The reservation with the largest population (143,000) is the Navajo reservation, which occupies parts of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The metropolitan areas with the largest concentrations of Native Americans are New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago and San Francisco (Bureau of the Census, 1990).

Between 1980 and 1990, the Native American population increased 54 percent. This is attributable to a birth rate 28 percent higher than the non-Native American population, decreasing infant mortality, and a rise in individuals reclaiming their Native American status due to increased cultural interest and decreased racial/ethnic barriers (O'Brien, 1992; Szasz, 1992). In the 1980 Census, the largest number of Native Americans were between 10 and 19 years of age. In the 1990 Census, the largest Native American age group was birth through age 9 (National Advisory Council on Indian Education [NACIE], 1992). The current median age of Native Americans is 23.5 years, compared to the non-Native median age of 30.0 years.

### DEFINITION OF "NATIVE AMERICAN"

Within the Native American community, differences in the way the term "Native American" is defined are based primarily on the proportion of lineage traceable directly

[1] This chapter uses the term "Native American" to refer to this population. Other reports, studies, or organizations may use the term "American Indian," and that may appear in this report when these sources are referenced.



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to Native American ancestors. Definitions based on the different criteria used for the data collections presented in this chapter are described below:[2]

- *U.S. Census Definition*: In the 1990 Census, individuals were counted as Native Americans if they (1) stated it as their ethnic identity, and (2) provided the name of a State recognized or Federally recognized tribe or native village to which they belonged. In the Census, the term "Native American" refers to American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Aleuts. Note that the procedure used in the 1990 Census was a change from the 1980 (and previous) Census, when the census-taker rather than the respondent determined an individual's ethnic identity.

- *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*: NAEP data on race/ethnicity were self-reported, with few guidelines provided to students as to what the term means. The specific language of the question asked whether the student is an American Indian or Alaskan Native. Race/ethnicity data on students who were excluded from the NAEP assessment based on disability or limited English proficiency were provided by school personnel; the criteria they used are not known.

- *The U.S. Government* officially recognizes more than 500 Native American tribes and Alaska Native villages; however, there are many other tribes officially recognized by one or more States, and a number of tribes are in the process of seeking Federal recognition. Criteria for tribal membership vary from one tribe to another. Most tribes require a 25 percent blood quantum level, some accept proof of descendancy, while others (16 tribes) require a 50 percent blood quantum level (personal communication, BIA, August 1993).

## CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIVE AMERICANS THAT MAY AFFECT EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The National Advisory Council on Indian Education (NACIE) (1992) reports that 347,291 public school students are Native American. This represents between 85 and 90 percent of all Native American children in school; the remainder attend reservation schools administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). To be eligible to attend a BIA school, a child must be a member of a Federally recognized tribe, live on a

[2] The methods used to identify students' race/ethnicity for other data sets mentioned in this appendix vary, and are not well defined. For example, data obtained from school records to determine race/ethnicity may be based upon school personnel's observations of students, on last names indicating ethnic identity, on parent-provided information, or on student self-reports. The literature cited in this appendix does not usually report the definition used for Native American, but usually does report the source of the population identification, which may suggest the basis for the definition. For example, if the students attend a BIA school, the definition is known. If the students live on a reservation but attend a public school, the definition is less certain. These students may self-identify as Native Americans, but they may or may not be enrolled members of a tribe, and the tribe may or may not be Federally recognized or State recognized.

reservation, and have a 25 percent Native American blood quantum level (O'Connell, 1987). Approximately 50 percent of Native American children who live on reservations attend public school, with the remainder attending BIA-operated schools or schools operated by other groups under contract to the BIA (NACIE, 1991).

Although Native American students comprise only 0.98 percent of the public school enrollment nationwide, they account for at least 9 percent of school enrollment in Alaska, Oklahoma, and New Mexico (Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, 1991). In Arizona, Montana, and North Dakota, Native Americans account for more than 6 percent of public school enrollment. Enrollment of Native Americans students is more than 1 percent in 16 other States (Bureau of the Census, 1990).

Native Americans, as a group, are disadvantaged. Native Americans have high rates of poverty and unemployment, low educational attainment, and a 35.5 percent high school dropout rate (O'Brien, 1992), about 25 percent higher than the national average. Increased health-related problems and a shorter life span than other Americans are also characteristic of Native Americans. The death rate from alcohol-related causes is three times higher than among the general population (Hodgkinson, 1992). These types of problems are more severe for Native Americans who live on reservations or in rural areas.

Only 9 percent of Native American adults have completed four years of college, compared to 20 percent of the total population (O'Brien, 1992). Wright (1992) cites an even wider disparity, with only 6 percent of Native Americans holding four-year college degrees, compared to 23 percent of the total population.

In addition to economic disadvantage, several other factors may impede the ability of Native Americans to succeed in school; these are described in more depth below.

## Residence in Rural Areas

Most Native Americans live in rural areas, both on and off reservations. The rural nature of much of the Native American population makes it difficult to provide sufficient support services. Documented problems in providing services to rural residents include poor access to services, limited resources, transportation problems, and under-utilization of existing services (O'Connell, 1987). The effects of a rural location on personnel recruiting, and retention, on service delivery, and on program cost are also significant.

As shown in table 7.1, almost 50 percent of Native American students attend school in the nation's smallest school districts, which tend to be mainly rural. This is one factor that distinguishes the Native American population from all other small population groups in the United States. Approximately 57 percent of the nation's public school districts are small, rural districts that enroll about 20 percent of the student population nationwide (Office for Civil Rights, 1993). Given that a large number of students in the general population attend small, rural schools in sparsely populated districts, there is

## Table 7.1 1990 National Estimates for Public School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and School District Size

| School District Size | American Indian | | Asian/Pacific | | Hispanic | | Black | | White | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | |
| More than 25,000 students | 79,873 | 19.50 | 697,644 | 50.57 | 2,333,639 | 49.49 | 4,163,489 | 62.93 | 6,114,533 | 22.05 | 13,389,178 |
| 5,001 to 25,000 students | 94,670 | 23.11 | 458,432 | 33.23 | 1,486,912 | 31.53 | 1,443,891 | 21.83 | 8,899,741 | 32.10 | 12,383,646 |
| 3,001 to 5,000 students | 37,641 | 9.19 | 102,516 | 7.43 | 296,254 | 6.28 | 468,939 | 7.09 | 3,767,745 | 13.59 | 4,673,094 |
| 1,501 to 3,000 students | 81,244 | 19.84 | 76,748 | 5.56 | 341,928 | 7.25 | 335,725 | 5.07 | 4,474,262 | 16.14 | 5,309,908 |
| 301 to 1,500 students | 99,712 | 24.35 | 41,283 | 2.99 | 225,915 | 4.79 | 198,009 | 2.99 | 3,946,064 | 14.23 | 4,510,983 |
| Fewer than 300 students | 16,388 | 4.00 | 2,836 | 0.21 | 30,489 | 0.65 | 5,574 | 0.08 | 525,819 | 1.90 | 581,106 |
| TOTAL | 409,528 | 99.99* | 1,379,459 | 99.99* | 4,715,137 | 99.99* | 6,615,627 | 99.99* | 27,728,164 | 100.01* | 40,847,915 |

* Rounding error accounts for small discrepancies in percentage totals.

Source: 1990 Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Elementary and Secondary School Survey, February, 1993.



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increased interest in helping rural school districts provide greater educational opportunity (Freitas, 1992). In 1990, Freitas conducted a survey of superintendents and business managers of small, rural school districts. Based on this survey data, Freitas suggests that rural location and small size impact negatively on education because of:

- isolation imposed by terrain and distance;
- declining economies in many rural areas (including high rates of poverty and unemployment);
- the financial burden of Federal and State-mandated but underfunded or unfunded programs;
- reduced community value for formal education; and
- inappropriate and/or poor fiscal management practices.

While the districts Freitas (1992) uses as examples are not on Native American reservations or tribal lands, many of the descriptions would apply to these schools as well. One of the particular difficulties in these districts is the high cost of special education, which limits districts' ability to provide a diversity of programs for students.

Small rural districts in many parts of the country have more limited resources for minority education than large urban districts that serve significant numbers of minority students. Teachers and school staff in rural areas, often trained in large universities, may be unfamiliar with the cultural and language differences that affect the placement and performance of local minority students. In addition, in school districts included in a survey of rural schools, none had any formal in-district training to ensure that Native Americans were appropriately assessed, even among those school districts indicating that training was needed (Vadasy, Maddox & Davidson, 1992).

## Language

Speaking a language other than English as one's first language (language minority or LM) or limited proficiency in standard American English are characteristics that negatively impact the effectiveness of education for children from small racial/ethnic populations in the United States. Native Americans speak more than 250 native languages (Chafe, 1974). Many Native American children, particularly those living on or near reservations and trust lands, speak only their native language prior to attending school, or are limited English proficient (LEP) when they begin school. Educational difficulties and risk factors associated with LM-LEP status are well documented (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). In addition, cultural differences between Native Americans and school personnel may impact on educational achievement.

## Culture

It is important to recognize that Native American culture differs greatly from the majority American culture, and that some of these differences affect schooling. Native American children learn mainly by observation, rather than by direct instruction (Johnson, 1991). Children from some traditional Native American communities may be taught that the family is the most critical unit, and that they are representatives of their family first, and individuals second. Thus, individual performance is less important than it might be in the majority culture (Johnson & Ramirez, 1987).

The remainder of this chapter presents a compilation of information on the current status of the provision of special education and related services to Native American students with disabilities. The first section describes the numbers and characteristics of Native American students with disabilities, including preschoolers, and school-aged children served in public and BIA schools. The second section outlines educational programs for all Native American students and those that specifically target Native American students with disabilities. A description of funding of special education services for Native Americans is also included in this section. In the third major section the provision of special education services to Native American students with disabilities is described. Identification and assessment of special education students, educational placement, curricula development, instructional methods, and the search for adequate numbers of qualified personnel to meet educational needs are discussed.

## NUMBERS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Data from the Fall 1990 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey (Office for Civil Rights, 1993) indicate that Native Americans comprise approximately 1 percent of total public school enrollees, and approximately 1 percent of the children with mental retardation, emotional disturbance, learning disabilities, and speech and language impairments nationwide. As shown in table 7.2, Native Americans are more likely to receive special education services for these disabilities than children from all other racial/ethnic groups, except for black students. For Native Americans, as with all other racial/ethnic groups, the disability with the highest incidence is specific learning disabilities, with speech impairments the second largest category (see table 7.3).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) gathered data related to race/ethnicity and disability for the sample of students in the 1990 NAEP survey (NCES, 1993). For Native American students, the rate of enrollment in special education was not in proportion to the general school population.[3] In the sample, which was drawn to be representative of three age/grade cohorts in the nation,

[3] These students all attend public, non-BIA schools. BIA schools were included in the sampling frame, but none were actually drawn in the sample used.

Table 7.2 Percentage of Students Receiving Special Education, by Racial Ethnic Group

| Race/Ethnic Group | Percent |
|---|---|
| Native American | 10.76 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 3.65 |
| White | 9.53 |
| Hispanic | 8.24 |
| Black | 11.26 |

Note: Includes only students with mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities, and speech impairments.

Source: 1990 Office for Civil Rights Elementary and Secondary School Survey (OCR, 1993).

Native Americans accounted for 2.5 percent of students in the grade 4/age 9 cohort, but 4.1 percent of the grade 4/age 9 students in special education. For the grade 8/age 14 cohort, Native Americans comprised 1.8 percent of the students and 2.3 percent of the students in special education. Likewise for the grade 12/age 17 cohort, Native Americans represented 0.8 percent of students enrolled and 1.8 percent of the special education students. These data indicate that Native Americans may comprise a somewhat disproportionate percentage of the special education population.

## Preschool-Aged Native American Students with Disabilities

In 1990, the General Accounting Office (GAO) (1990) reported to Congress an estimate of the number of Native American preschoolers with disabilities and the sufficiency of services provided to them. The study was limited to preschoolers at 63 of 297 BIA-operated schools on Federally recognized Native American reservations in 20 States. The data were collected primarily from the coordinators of special education in BIA field offices. Researchers concluded that (1) many Native American preschoolers have not been identified and are not receiving any services; (2) of those who are identified and receive some services, few have completed Individualized Education Plans (IEPs); and (3) of those with IEPs, at least 24 percent do not receive all the services recommended on them.

GAO estimated that 8,500 to 12,800 Native American children age 3 or 4 had some type of disability. Of these children, 2948 lived on reservations or tribal lands with BIA schools. Of these, 838 received special education services in the 1989-90 school year from the BIA, from Indian Head Start, from the Indian Health Service, or from public schools. GAO reported that the remainder received either inadequate or no services.



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## Table 7.3 Number and Percentage[a/] of Students Receiving Special Education in 1990, by Racial/Ethnic Group

| Type of Disability | American Indian | Percent of Group | Asian/ Pacific Islander | Percent of Group | Hispanic | Percent of Group | Black | Percent of Group | White | Percent of Group | Total | Percent of Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Specific Learning Disabilities | 24,745 | 56.15 | 22,037 | 43.82 | 220,703 | 56.79 | 327,799 | 44.01 | 1,377,845 | 52.15 | 1,973,129 | 50.99 |
| Speech Impairments | 11,394 | 25.85 | 19,557 | 38.89 | 92,100 | 23.70 | 171,540 | 23.03 | 780,244 | 29.53 | 1,074,835 | 27.77 |
| Educable Mental Retardation | 4,199 | 9.53 | 3,605 | 7.17 | 30,479 | 7.84 | 138,963 | 18.66 | 223,953 | 8.48 | 401,199 | 10.37 |
| Trainable Mental Retardation | 938 | 2.13 | 3,281 | 6.52 | 29,649 | 7.63 | 47,253 | 6.34 | 68,532 | 2.59 | 149,653 | 3.87 |
| Serious Emotional Disturbance | 2,793 | 6.34 | 1,813 | 3.60 | 15,733 | 4.05 | 59,190 | 7.95 | 191,468 | 7.25 | 270,997 | 7.00 |
| All Disabilities | 44,069 | 100.00 | 50,293 | 100.00 | 388,664 | 100.01* | 744,745 | 99.99* | 2,642,042 | 100.00 | 3,869,813 | 100.00 |

a/ These are the only disabilities reported by race/ethnic group by the Office for Civil Rights.

* Rounding error accounts for small discrepancies in percentage totals.

Source: 1990 Elementary and Secondary School Survey, Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, February, 1993.

## Table 7.4 Number and Percentage of Children Receiving Special Education in BIA Schools and the Nation, by Age Group: School Year 1992-93

| Agency | Age Group[a/] | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 6-11 | | 12-17 | | 18-21 | | 6-21 | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Bureau of Indian Affairs | 3,451 | 52.46 | 2,758 | 41.93 | 369 | 5.61 | 6,578 | 100 |
| Nation | 2,405,230 | 46.52 | 1,991,885 | 38.53 | 236,559 | 4.56 | 5,170,242 | 100 |

a/ The BIA no longer serves children birth through age 5 directly.

Source: Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, Data Analysis System (DANS).





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GAO suggested that changes in policy, procedures, and/or funding were needed to provide more and better services to these young children.

## Native American Students with Disabilities Served in BIA Schools

Prior to the 1975 passage of P.L. 94-142, funds and services for Native American children and youth with disabilities were minimal and, to a large extent, unknown. There were 6,578 students with disabilities, age 6 through 21, served under Part B in BIA-operated schools in the 1992-93 school year. Of the Native American children served in special education programs in BIA schools, 9.4 percent are age 6 through 17, and 5.6 percent are in the transition age group of 18-21 (see table 7.4). BIA does not directly provide services for the birth through age five population. That population is served through States or State programs affiliated with BIA (U.S. Department of Education, 1992).

### *Types of Disability of Native American Students in BIA Schools*

The proportion of students age 6 through 21 with disabilities is approximately 10.7 percent, which is similar to that in the nation as a whole (Office for Civil Rights, 1993). The most recent OSEP data show that the proportion of special education students with specific learning disabilities served in BIA schools (see table 7.5) is 4.5 percentage points higher for Native Americans than for the nation as a whole. Dodd and Rose (1991) explain that the greater prevalence of learning disabilities in the Native American population may be attributable to problems with tests and identification procedures. Since the causes of learning disabilities are not well known, however, they also suggest that "some of the suspected causes might be more frequent among Native American persons." As an example, Dodd and Rose cite a higher incidence of otitis media (infection of the middle ear) among Native American children, as well as studies showing a relationship between otitis media and later reading problems. They also raise the possibility that the high rate of substance abuse reported among Native American people may contribute to high rates of learning disabilities in the population. Another alternative, explained by Vadasy and Maddox (1993), is that in districts with many students with extreme educational needs and a variety of compensatory and remedial programs, special education becomes "the service of last resort," where the hardest-to-serve students are placed. Thus, Native American children, who may often have complex needs in language, learning, health, and social areas, are often placed in special education.

## Native American Students with Disabilities Served in Public Schools

Little information is available describing Native Americans with disabilities who attend public schools or the special education programs and services in which they participate. Since Native Americans are often grouped in the "other" category for race/ethnicity, their data often cannot be analyzed separately (Johnson, 1991).

Table 7.5 Number and Percentage of Children Age 6 through 21 Receiving Special Education in BIA Schools and the Nation, by Disability: School Year 1992-93

| Type of Disability | Bureau of Indian Affairs | | Nation | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Specific learning disabilities | 3,660 | 55.64 | 2,369,385 | 51.13 |
| Speech or language impairments | 1,743 | 26.50 | 1,000,154 | 21.58 |
| Mental retardation | 359 | 5.46 | 533,715 | 11.52 |
| Serious emotional disturbance | 447 | 6.80 | 402,668 | 8.69 |
| Hearing impairments | 46 | .70 | 60,896 | 1.31 |
| Multiple disabilities | 174 | 2.65 | 103,215 | 2.23 |
| Orthopedic impairments | 18 | .27 | 52,921 | 1.14 |
| Other health impairments | 69 | 1.05 | 66,054 | 1.43 |
| Visual impairments | 14 | .21 | 23,811 | 0.51 |
| Deaf-blindness | 27 | .41 | 1,425 | 0.03 |
| Autism | 10 | .15 | 15,527 | .34 |
| Traumatic brain injury | 11 | .17 | 3,903 | .08 |
| All disabilities | 6,578 | 100.00 | 4,633,674 | 100.00 |

Source: Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, Data Analysis System (DANS).

Furthermore, some studies that identify Native Americans as a group do not use a sampling design that permits separate analyses of data on Native Americans, or comparisons with other racial/ethnic groups.

The 1990 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provides some information on special education for Native Americans who do not attend BIA-operated schools.[4] Students in special education could be included in the 1990 NAEP assessment procedures if school personnel thought that the students could participate meaningfully in the testing. Students could be excluded from the assessment for reasons of disability, limited English proficiency, or inadequate reading skills.

[4] The NAEP sampling frame included BIA schools; however, when sampling procedures were completed, none were actually selected for the sample.

Additional data, which included reasons for exclusion, were then collected for all non-tested students.

As shown in table 7.6, in the grade 4/age 9 cohort, 3.7 percent of Native Americans had an IEP; this percentage was larger than all other racial/ethnic groups. In the grade 8/age 13 cohort, 2.1 percent of Native American children had an IEP; this proportion was only slightly higher than that for whites and lower than that for Hispanics and blacks. In the oldest cohort, 3.0 percent of Native Americans had an IEP; this figure was higher than that for all other racial/ethnic groups.

The sampling design and the small number of Native Americans in the excluded student sample do not support drawing conclusions about the Native American population in general. Within the group of excluded students, however, the characteristics of Native American students fit the patterns observed in other data. For example, the largest category of disability for the two older age/grade cohorts is specific learning disabilities. In the youngest age/grade cohort, a high incidence of speech impairments is reported, as well as visual impairments. Of the Native American students excluded from the NAEP assessment, in all three age/grade cohorts, more than 75 percent were excluded because of their disability. In the grade 12/age 17 cohort, another 8.3 percent were excluded for both disability and limited English proficiency. In the youngest cohort, nearly 20 percent of the excluded students were considered non-readers and were excluded for that reason (NCES, 1992).

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

This section describes some of the Federal programs designed to help State and local education agencies meet the educational needs of Native American children or to assist in areas where Native Americans tend to reside. The first part describes programs available for all children. The second part describes services specifically for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, children, and youth with disabilities.

### Federal General Education Programs Serving Native Americans

Two Federal programs that assist in meeting the educational needs of all Native American students are the Johnson O'Malley Educational Assistance Program and the Impact Aid Program.

The Johnson O'Malley Educational Assistance Program provided nearly $25 million, in FY 1991, to the BIA to fund supplementary programs for qualified Native American children (including those with disabilities) attending public schools, and to support programs for 3- and 4-year-old Native American children. The supplemental activities supported by this program relate to education needs, teacher support, and parent costs. A total of 225,871 children were served in this program in FY 1991 (NACIE, 1992).

## Table 7.6 Number of Students Assessed and Percentage with IEPs in the 1990 National Assessment of Educational Progress, by Cohort and Race/Ethnicity

| Cohort | Race/Ethnicity | | | | | | | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | American Indian | | Asian/Pacific Islanders | | Hispanic | | Black | | White | | Unclassified | | | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| Grade 4/Age 9 (N) | 710 | | 888 | | 5,608 | | 4,802 | | 16,833 | | 34 | | 28,875 | |
| With IEP | 26 | 3.67 | 18 | 2.03 | 152 | 2.71 | 92 | 1.92 | 342 | 2.03 | * | – | 630 | 2.18 |
| Grade 8/Age 13 (N) | 528 | | 1,095 | | 4,749 | | 4,342 | | 18,481 | | 55 | | 29,250 | |
| With IEP | 15 | 2.06 | 7 | 3.10 | 147 | 3.10 | 101 | 2.32 | 366 | 1.98 | 1 | 1.82 | 637 | 2.18 |
| Grade 12/Age 17 (N) | 236 | | 1,135 | | 3,235 | | 4,143 | | 19,561 | | 31 | | 28,341 | |
| With IEP | 7 | 2.97 | 6 | .53 | 53 | 1.64 | 71 | 1.71 | 243 | 1.24 | 1 | 9.09 | 381 | 381 |

* Not reported.

Source: Unweighted NAEP data from the National Center for Educational Statistics, 1992.

The Impact Aid Program, in FY 1991, provided more than $260 million to school districts for 123,225 children who live on Native American land and attend school in the district or whose parents work on the land. Because these students and their families do not live within the district and are not included in its tax base, Congress authorizes grants to the districts to help pay for their services. A higher per-pupil amount is provided for children with disabilities than for those without disabilities. This program does not directly serve Native American children by setting aside the grants as strictly for use in conjunction with those services, but "indirectly as deemed appropriate by the school district" -- that is, the monies are used in the district's general budget (NACIE, 1992).

## Federal Programs Serving Native Americans with Disabilities

Almost nine of every ten school-age Native American children attend public schools and are provided special education services and programs through the same channels and funding as any public school student. State and local dollars account for approximately 93 percent of funding for all special education. This amount is supplemented by Federal special education funding under Part B, which allocates funds to States based on child count data. States then distribute Part B funds to school districts. Public school districts are responsible for providing services to eligible children, and for collecting and reporting required data to the State. Native American students with disabilities who attend public schools and do not reside on Native American reservations or tribal lands are served under this arrangement.

For some Native Americans with disabilities, however, the pattern for special education funding and service delivery differs from public schools. As noted previously, the Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) plays an important role in schools that are on the reservations or trust lands of Federally recognized tribes. In some cases, the BIA operates schools or contracts with other organizations (primarily Native American tribes) to operate schools. On other reservations and trust lands, tribes operate their own schools independently from the BIA.

### *IDEA, Part B Set-Aside*

Funding for special education through Part B for students with disabilities age 5 through 21 in BIA schools is based not on child count, but on a set-aside from State formula funds. The IDEA Amendments of 1991 (P.L. 102-119) changed the formula used to distribute the set-aside funds. Originally, the set-aside was 1.25 percent of the aggregate amount provided in Part B for students age 3 through 21 to all States for that fiscal year. The amended formula sets aside 1 percent of the aggregate amount for students age 5 through 21, and .25 percent for students age 3-5.

The amendments also reduced the responsibilities of the Secretary of the Interior for the education of Native American children with disabilities, while increasing the responsibilities of State education agencies (SEAs) for Native American children with

disabilities who live on reservations but are not enrolled in elementary or secondary programs operated or funded by the BIA. Prior to the amendments, the Secretary of the Interior was responsible for submitting a plan to the appropriate Congressional committees that made provision for services to all children with disabilities residing on reservations, whether or not the reservation was served by a BIA school and provided for coordination of services, regardless of the source, including Federal agencies and States. Under the amended Act, the Secretary is now responsible for providing services to children with disabilities age 5 through 21 who are enrolled in elementary and secondary schools for Native American children operated or funded by the Secretary of the Interior. SEAs are now "responsible for ensuring that all of the requirements of Part B are implemented for all children aged 3-21 on reservations" who are not served by BIA schools (34 CFR §300.300(c)).

This means that the BIA and SEAs share responsibility and must cooperate to ensure the provision of necessary services to Native American children with disabilities. While the role of SEAs in funding, data collection, and compliance was previously somewhat ambiguous, the regulatory changes have clarified roles, giving SEAs broader responsibility for ensuring compliance with IDEA and for data collection.

The 1 percent set-aside under Part B provided over $25 million in special education programs and services to 6,578 children with disabilities (age 6 through 21) who lived on Native American reservations with BIA schools in FY 1991.

### *IDEA, Part H Program*

The Program for Infants and Toddlers was created by Part H of P.L. 99-457, the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986. Part H requires the States to address the needs of infants and toddlers (children from birth through age 2) with disabilities and their families through a multiagency, multidisciplinary, family-centered, coordinated system of culturally sensitive services. Child Find activities, coordinated with a variety of health and social service agencies, are the main vehicle for identifying children.

Programs for children with disabilities or those at risk, from birth through age 5, are widely recognized as crucial in preventing school failure in later years. The benefits of such programs for young Native American children with disabilities include developing increased language skills, providing opportunities for parents to become advocates for their children before they enter a school environment, and providing home-based opportunities for parent training and family intervention (Vadasy & Maddox, 1993). Early intervention measures may be effective in helping prevent the need for special education services later on. Despite the benefits of these programs, however, they have not been available for many Native American children and their families (GAO, 1990). Because of the rapid growth in the birth through age 9 segment of the Native American population, there is a need to expand early childhood programs for at-risk children and for children with disabilities in public and tribal education settings.

From age 3 through 5, children with disabilities are eligible to receive special education services under the Preschool Grant Program. In its 1990 study, GAO suggested that Native American preschoolers with disabilities are inadequately served. Researchers identified several reasons for insufficient service provision, including an acute shortage of qualified personnel in BIA schools and inadequate funding to hire a sufficient number of qualified personnel. At the time of the report, at least 61 specialized staff vacancies existed. As a result of increases in the target population, field offices requested $4.3 million in the 1988-89 school year. BIA provided only $2.7 million to promote specific educational services (GAO, 1990).

GAO (1990) also noted the lack of clear agreement between the BIA and States about which was responsible for providing services to young Native American children with disabilities on reservations with BIA schools. "These differences could make efforts to serve these children difficult and contribute to BIA's inability to serve some children for whom it is responsible," GAO found. Furthermore, GAO explained, "Interior believes BIA is only responsible for children enrolled in its programs and that it may supplement other providers' services. Education and some States believe that BIA is solely responsible for all Indian children on reservations with BIA schools." Subsequent changes in law and regulation were made to clarify responsibility for delivering services to young Native American children with disabilities.

The IDEA Amendments of 1991 and implementing regulations included major changes aimed at programs for young Native American children with disabilities on reservations. These changes were meant to clarify the legal responsibilities of various agencies in serving Native American children with disabilities, and to change funding patterns to reflect changes in responsibility for service provision. The amendments directly affect service provision to children with disabilities who reside on or near Native American reservations served by BIA-funded schools. Problems with preschool programs noted by Congress in passing the 1991 amendments to IDEA included:

- lack of clarity with respect to which entity, the BIA or the State, is responsible for each student or child;
- lack of Child Find activity, leading researchers to project a population of up to 90,000 preschool-age students who have not been identified and who are not receiving services; and
- inadequate services and individualized education programs (IEPs) or inappropriate IEPs based upon available, not "needed" services (U.S. Congress, 1991).

Recent changes in regulations for the Part H program, which serves children aged birth through two years, represent an effort to provide for a "seamless system of services for children with disabilities from birth through 5 years of age." Congress recognized the need to provide a smooth transition between Part H and the Preschool Grant Program, and to maintain programs that are appropriate and family focused, without overlap in

funding or services. Regulatory changes for the Preschool Grant Program became final in September 1992. Some of these changes directly affect funding patterns, data collecting and reporting, and programmatic responsibility for Native American children with disabilities. The changes in responsibilities resulting from the 1991 Amendments are reflected in table 7.7, which summarizes the provisions.

### *OSEP Personnel Preparation Grants*

In FY 1991, the Office of Special Education Programs' Division of Personnel Preparation funded 23 projects to train Native Americans to serve Native American children with disabilities and recruit Native Americans in areas of high Native American populations to teach in these areas. Funding for these programs in FY 1991 totalled more than $1.9 million (NACIE, 1992).

## THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES TO NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

This section describes the provision of appropriate special education services for Native American students. Major steps in the educational process, including identification and assessment, placement, curriculum development, instructional methods, and personnel are described as they relate to Native American students with disabilities. Particular challenges resulting from limited English proficiency, culture, and residence in rural areas are discussed.

### Identification and Assessment

Assessment processes specified in IDEA are meant to ensure that those who place children in special education programs have sufficient knowledge of their abilities and disabilities to design an appropriate program and measure progress within that program. Accurate, fair assessment of Native American children is intricately affected by the interaction among the child's ability, the parents, the assessment instruments, and the assessor, all of which must operate within a language and cultural context that is fair and appropriate.

IDEA stipulates stringent evaluation procedures. Tests must not be racially or culturally discriminatory, and test materials and procedures must be provided and administered in the language or other mode of communication in which the student is most proficient, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so (34 CFR §300.532).

Johnson (1991) suggests that assessment is one of the most important issues to address in improving educational opportunity for Native American and Alaska Native students with special needs. Assessment influences many educational decisions, including placement in instructional programs, curriculum delivery, teacher and parent

## Table 7.7 Roles and Responsibilities with Implications for Interactions as per IDEA, Part B, Section 611, and Services to Native American Children with Disabilities, Age 3 Through 5 Years

| Secretary of Education (DOE/OSEP) | BIA Advisory Board (Committee) | Secretary of Interior (DOI/BIA) | Tribes* | LEAs | SEAs | DHHS | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Makes payment to DOI (as per .25%) for distribution of payments to eligible tribes<br><br>Receives biennial reports from Secretary of Interior and may require additional information if needed<br><br>Prepares Annual Report to Congress | Assist with coordination of services within BIA and other local, State, and Federal agencies, birth through 21 years<br><br>Assist and advise DOI<br><br>Develop and recommend policies for collaboration<br><br>Assist with dissemination of information<br><br>Assist with preparation of reports | Allocates funds to eligible tribes (.25% of aggregate is allocated for 3- through 5-year-olds)<br><br>Submits biennial report summaries of tribal reports to Secretary of Education<br><br>Offers and provides technical assistance to SEAs, LEAs, and tribes but may not use any of these funds for administration, Child Count, or technical assistance<br><br>Establishes Advisory Board (Committee) and selects chair-person<br><br>Submits to House and Senate a plan to coordinate all services for Native American children (0-21) with disabilities on reservations and distributes plan to others | Receive payment from DOI<br><br>After 1992, distribution of funds to each eligible tribe must report data to DOI/BIA for the formula, which is based on the child count<br><br>Make biennial report to Secretary of Interior including: activities, numbers of children contacted and receiving services, contracts and agreements entered into, and estimate of number of children needing services during the 2 years following this report<br><br>Encourage involvement of Native American parents<br><br>Participate on BIA Advisory Board (Committee)<br><br>Use funds to assist States in Child Find, screening, early identification, and provide direct services and parent training, AND make referrals to local, State, and Federal entities for services or further diagnosis<br><br>May provide services directly or may contract with BIA, LEA, public and private agencies | Representatives participate on BIA Advisory Board (Committee)<br><br>May contract with eligible tribes for services, but LEA/SEA have mandate for provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE)<br><br>Provide December 1 count to SEA for Part B | Collaborate with tribes and others in planning, providing, and assuring FAPE to all 3- through 5-year-old Native American children<br><br>May contract with tribes to provide services and thereby assure FAPE<br><br>Representatives participate on BIA Advisory Board (Committee)<br><br>Ensure provision of FAPE to all 3-through 5-year-olds and all Native American children 5 through 21 years old, not enrolled in BIA schools<br><br>Do December 1 count and report to DOE/OSEP on all 3-through 21-year-olds served by SEA | Participates in agreement with DOI for coordination of services, cost, etc., for Native American children, birth through 21 years old | Other agencies may contract with tribes to provide services<br><br>Other local, State, Federal agencies shall as appropriate receive referrals for diagnoses or services<br><br>U.S. House and Senate committees receive plan for coordination from DOI and receive annual report from DOE/OSEP<br><br>Other audiences may receive coordination plan from BIA |

* Note: Tribes are eligible to participate which have elementary and secondary schools (on their reservations) for Native American children operated or funded by DOI.

Key:
DOE refers to U.S. Department of Education.
OSEP refers to U.S. Office of Special Education Programs.
BIA refers to Bureau of Indian Affairs.
DOI refers to U.S. Department of the Interior.
ICC refers to Interagency Coordinating Council.
LEAs refers to Local Educational Agencies.
SEAs refers to State Educational Agencies.
DHHS refers to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Source: Adapted from a table published by the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System. Differences are due to regulatory or statutory changes.





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## Table 7.7 (cont'd) Roles and Responsibilities with Implications for Interactions as per IDEA, Part H, Section 684, and Services to Native American Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (Birth to 3 Years)

| Secretary of Education (DOE/OSEP) | BIA Advisory Board (Committee) | Secretary of Interior (DOI/BIA) | Tribes* | Lead Agency (Part H) | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Makes Part H payment (1.25% of aggregate) to DOI for their distribution of payments to eligible tribes<br><br>Receives biennial reports from Secretary of Interior and may require additional information if needed | Shall include parents of Native American infants and toddler members and address concerns of this population<br><br>Assist with coordination of birth - 5 services within BIA and other local, State, and Federal agencies, birth through 21 years | Allocates Part H funds to tribes (1.25% to aggregate)<br><br>Submits biennial report summaries of tribal reports to Secretary of Education<br><br>Provides support but may not use these funds for administration, Child Count, or technical assistance<br><br>Participates on the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council (FICC) | Receive payment from DOI<br><br>After 1992, each eligible tribe must report data to DOI/BIA for the formula<br><br>To be eligible to receive funds, make biennial report to Secretary of Interior including: activities, numbers of children contracted and receiving services, contracts and agreements entered into, and estimate of number of children needing services during the 2 years following this report<br><br>Encourage involvement of Native American parents<br><br>Participate on BIA Advisory Board (Committee)<br><br>Use funds to assist States in Child Find, screening, early identification, and provide direct services and parent training, AND make referrals to local, State, and Federal entities for services or further diagnosis<br><br>May provide services directly or may contract with BIA, LEA, public and private agencies | Collaborates with tribes and others in planning, providing, and assuring early intervention services to all eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities during the full implementation stage<br><br>May contract with tribes to provide services<br><br>May include BIA and/or tribe representation on State ICC | Other agencies may contract with tribes to provide services<br><br>Other local, State, Federal agencies shall as appropriate receive referrals for diagnoses or services |

* Note: Tribes eligible to participate are those which have elementary and secondary schools (on their reservations) for Native American children operated or funded by DOI.

Source: Adapted from a table published by the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System. Differences are due to regulatory or statutory changes.



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expectations, access to services, and classroom grouping. Johnson (1991) expresses concern that "in the absence of fair or non-discriminatory assessment, appropriate educational decisions for Native American students with special needs may be seriously diminished."

Johnson (1992) cites a number of studies conducted over a 10-year period indicating patterns of performance for Native American children that are different from those of the majority population. Using such studies to interpret the test performance of Native American children may serve to better identify those who could benefit from special education, and the types of services they need.

Research studies suggest that language minority-limited English proficient (LM-LEP) students are over-represented in special education, particularly within some disability categories, such as specific learning disability and speech impairment (Office for Civil Rights, 1988; Santos & Santos, 1984). Assessment for at-risk students and for students with known disabilities is particularly difficult for LM-LEP students because there are few professionals who can administer assessments to Native American children in their first language, and because many assessment measures are not valid for this group of students. This assessment problem makes it extremely difficult to distinguish between language difference and disability.

Furthermore, the assessment of Native American children is complicated by the limited number of instruments which might be useful for students from different language and culture groups. Since some of the standardized tests used are biased against Native Americans (as well as against other small population groups), their use may contribute to self-fulfilling prophecies of low achievement among Native American students (Johnson, 1992). The following factors contribute to test bias against Native American children:

- language skill differences;
- physiological factors (such as poor hearing resulting from otitis media);
- neurological factors (including brain hemispheric preferences); and
- sociocultural factors (Johnson, 1992).

In addition, some tests may be biased in favor of Native Americans. For example, a study of tests commonly used in early identification programs (a kindergarten screening battery) showed that these tests were biased *in favor of* Native Americans by over-predicting achievement. The screening battery included the following: the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised, the Kindergarten Language Screening Test, the Developmental Visual-Motor Integration Test, and the McCarthy Draw-A-Child Test. When such a test battery, administered at the beginning of the kindergarten year, overpredicts achievement and subsequent testing at the end of the year indicates actual achievement well below the predicted achievement level, children are then referred to

special education based on the apparent discrepancy. Thus, Native American children may be inappropriately referred in high numbers and classified as having a learning disability. The study clearly indicates that prediction of a Native American child's achievement test scores from kindergarten screening tests is more accurate when race is taken into account (Stone & Gridley, 1991).

Based on reports of assessment practices that do not comply adequately with IDEA and that do not meet the needs of Native American students with disabilities and those at risk, Johnson (1991) suggests consideration of alternative assessment procedures. These alternatives include academic task analysis, pluralistic assessment (where norms for specific tests are established separately for specific ethnic and socioeconomic groups), translation of norm-referenced tests into Native American languages, and use of culture-fair tests. Johnson also suggests that school psychologists and special educators should become "advocates for the child in scrutinizing critically the social and educational context within which the child has developed." Psychologists developing new instruments and procedures should formulate an assessment paradigm that includes socio-cultural dimensions and strives to eliminate test bias. Johnson's specific recommendations to improve assessment practices with Native American children are as follows:

- develop a comprehensive knowledge base of current practices in assessment;
- establish a resource network of persons with expertise in testing Native children;
- modify the assessment process by using the K-ABC or the LPAD on a research basis and bring the results to a network of professionals who can evaluate the usefulness of the instruments;
- incorporate the advocacy (i.e., home, school, and community information) ... and socio-cultural aspects (i.e., work sample and analytic teaching) ... to focus attention on achieving valid predictions, placements, and educational plans; and
- obtain thorough knowledge of the child's cultural experience and location, which is critical for test interpretation.

Other recommendations for fair assessment and placement practices, based on a year-long study of programs and services for migrant, Hispanic, and Native American children in the Yakima Valley of Washington, include the following:

- using a variety of safeguards to protect children from inappropriate placement in special education – a heavy reliance on test scores should be replaced with professional judgment;

- involving parents in making decisions about special education assessment, placement, and services;
- schools and community agencies working together to make good decisions about placement and services;
- all special education programs offering appropriate services for minority students; and
- school districts implementing policies regarding identification and placement for children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effect (Vadasy and Maddox, 1993).

Information concerning reservation and urban ties, language spoken in the home, and participation in traditional customs can provide additional knowledge of the ecological context, which can influence test performance (Johnson, 1991).

Dodd, et al. (1992) conducted a study on the vocational readiness of Native American high school students with disabilities in Montana. Part of the study involved interviews with school psychologists who served schools with large Native American populations or who had Native Americans among their clientele. These psychologists recognize that using standard assessment measures with Native American children requires adaptations and clinical judgment based on knowledge of the Native culture, language, and family systems. Furthermore, they confirm the belief that using the standard definition for learning disability (i.e., a discrepancy formula) and common measures used to do this result in over-identification of Native Americans with learning disabilities.

The relative importance of formal assessment measures and other types of information in special education eligibility decisions is a controversial issue. Most of the personnel interviewed in a study conducted by Vadasy, Maddox, and Davidson (1992) indicated that professional judgment was extremely important in determining eligibility for special education programs. Other factors affecting the placement of Native American children in these programs are the availability of other program options and services. Many of the educators indicated that they preferred placement in Chapter 1 (SOP) to placement in special education, so that they can focus more on providing assistance in the regular classroom.

## Educational Placement

IDEA requires students with disabilities to be placed in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs. Data indicate that Native American students with disabilities in BIA schools receive special education services in placements that differ from placements for all students with disabilities. Native American children attending BIA-operated schools are more likely to receive special education services in a resource room and are less likely to receive special education services in either a

regular classroom, a separate classroom, or a separate public or private facility (see table 7.8).

Since more than half of Native American children with disabilities experience learning disabilities, it is important to look at this specific subgroup. The data in table 7.8 indicate that more than 82 percent of the students with learning disabilities who attend BIA schools receive special education services in a resource room, compared with only 54 percent of all school-age students with disabilities. Also, in the nation, more than 22 percent are served in a regular classroom, whereas in BIA schools the proportion is approximately 11 percent. Another significant difference between the two groups of students with learning disabilities is that only approximately 6 percent are served in separate classes in BIA schools, compared to more than 22 percent in the general population.

In BIA schools, the educational environments in which Native American children with hearing impairments are served are also significantly different from the environments of students with hearing impairments in the nation as a whole (see table 7.8). Hearing impairments are a major concern for Native Americans, since, as noted earlier, otitis media, which often results in hearing impairment, is far more prevalent among this group than in the general population. Furthermore, there is concern that students with hearing impairments are underreported and underserved (Johnson, 1991). Among those Native American children age 6 through 21 with hearing impairments, nearly 58 percent received special education services in a public residential facility in school year 1991-92, compared with 10 percent of these children nationally (U.S. Department of Education, 1992). Additional data from the Annual Survey of Hearing Impaired Children and Youth, conducted by the Center for Assessment and Demographic Studies of Gallaudet University, support this finding. In this survey, 40.1 percent of the Native Americans with hearing impairment received special education services in public or private residential settings, compared to 23.4 percent of the U.S. population of students with hearing impairments (personal communication, OSEP, March, 1993).

Very little data are available on educational placements for Native American students with disabilities in public schools. Across all three age/grade cohorts of students excluded from NAEP testing, the majority of *all* students with disabilities spent more than 50 percent of the school day in the mainstream. This pattern was also true for the Native Americans included in this group, all of whom attended non-BIA schools (NCES, 1992).

## Curriculum

The development of an appropriate curriculum for Native American students with disabilities can be hampered by language and cultural issues. Language development, particularly for LM-LEP students, is a major consideration in educating Native American children with disabilities. One must take into account that each Native group is linguistically different from others and that language development patterns vary among Native American groups (Walker, 1987). Difficulties in language for

## Table 7.8 Number and Percentage of Children Age 6 through 21 with All Disabilities, Specific Learning Disabilities, and Hearing Impairments in BIA Schools and the Nation, by Educational Environment: School Year 1991-92

| | All Disabilities | | | | Specific Learning Disabilities | | | | Hearing Impairments | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Bureau of Indian Affairs | | Nation | | Bureau of Indian Affairs | | Nation | | Bureau of Indian Affairs | | Nation | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Regular class | 575 | 13.50 | 1,430,821 | 32.85 | 298 | 11.43 | 482,707 | 22.54 | 1 | 2.57 | 6,999 | 27.05 |
| Resource room | 3,115 | 73.12 | 1,586,701 | 36.43 | 2,151 | 82.51 | 1,148,853 | 53.65 | 7 | 25.00 | 5,399 | 20.87 |
| Separate class | 397 | 9.32 | 1,092,957 | 25.09 | 156 | 5.98 | 479,643 | 22.40 | 1 | 3.57 | 7,518 | 29.06 |
| Public separate facility | 4 | 0.09 | 125,675 | 2.89 | 0 | 0.00 | 13,228 | 0.62 | 1 | 3.57 | 1,452 | 5.61 |
| Private separate facility | 6 | 0.14 | 58,305 | 1.34 | 0 | 0.00 | 9,349 | 0.44 | 0 | 0 | 843 | 3.26 |
| Public residential facility | 59 | 1.38 | 24,654 | 0.57 | 0 | 0.00 | 1,475 | 0.07 | 18 | 64.28 | 3,343 | 12.92 |
| Private residential facility | 96 | 2.25 | 11,936 | 0.27 | 0 | 0.00 | 1,379 | 0.06 | 0 | 0 | 180 | 0.69 |
| Homebound/hospital environment | 8 | 0.19 | 24,363 | 0.56 | 2 | 0.08 | 4,934 | 0.23 | 0 | 0 | 140 | 0.54 |

Source: Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, Data Analysis System (DANS).

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Native Americans may include phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Many Native Americans in special education programs are classified with speech impairments based on articulation errors which may, in fact, not be considered errors in the student's native language or in "Indian English." Walker (1987) provides some recommendations to educators for helping Native American LM-LEP students acquire language skills. These include:

- teaching in the child's first language to build conceptual skills and cognitive development;
- providing intense English language instruction, beginning at an early age;
- training all professional staff (since few Native American staff are available) in the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the population they serve;
- always including language in the IEP, whether or not it is listed as the child's primary disability;
- maintaining the integrity of the child's culture in developing the IEP; and
- considering school history in determining the eligibility of a Native child for special education services, rather than relying only on tests.

In the Fifteenth Annual Report to Congress (U.S. Department of Education, 1993), the coordination of language and special education services was the focus of an appendix on LM-LEP students with disabilities. Important approaches described in that appendix that are particularly relevant for the Native American population include involving parents, as well as mainstream teachers, in a team approach to service delivery; using culturally relevant curricula taught in the primary language; including development of English language proficiency in the IEP; and including development of conceptual skills in the native language in the IEP. Ortiz et al. (1989) suggest additional instructional strategies, such as using contextual clues in presenting new information; building on students' prior knowledge; providing linguistic feedback, thereby modeling English; promoting on-task behavior by encouraging expressions of children's experience, language, and interests; fostering feelings of success; giving children a sense of control over their own learning; and teaching holistically, rather than in isolated segments of information.

An issue to consider in designing curricula for Native American special education programs is whether or not these programs should be bilingual. Some proponents of bilingual instruction believe that using Native American languages as the language of instruction and using these languages in social contexts within schools are keys to the perpetuation and maintenance of Native American languages and culture, and should be encouraged. Critics of this position cite difficulties in determining individuals'

proficiency in Native American languages, the lack of qualified professionals fluent in them, the lack of curricular materials, and the socioeconomic effect on Native Americans of not teaching or emphasizing English language proficiency (Johnson, 1991).

One suggestion for helping Native American children, particularly those with learning disabilities, achieve reading levels more comparable to their peers is to use materials that are culturally relevant. While the diversity of Native American cultures makes this difficult to accomplish, the benefits gained in improved reading comprehension scores are significant. For students with learning disabilities in particular, it is important that they be able to construct meaning from the text using prior knowledge -- i.e., the knowledge they hold of the real world (ERIC, 1990).

The adoption by BIA schools of components of "effective schools" models for cultural mainstream schools reflects the belief that effective schooling for Native Americans must account for students' cultural background (BIA, 1988). The research on effective schools presents some features that can be applied directly to Native American education. One example comes from a progress report for the 1989-90 school year on a pilot program in BIA schools. The project focused on utilizing the effective schools research and process as a framework for school improvement. In this project, eight correlates of school effectiveness were adopted, including high expectations for students, strong instructional leadership, good home/school/community relations, and a clear school mission. Twelve BIA schools embarked on programs to establish and work toward one or more of the eight goals. Despite the emphasis on "all" students in the goals, however, none of the programs specified any accommodation or specific effort for students with disabilities (BIA, 1990a). This study and other reports suggest that as BIA schools look to improve educational opportunity for all their students, educational opportunity for their students with disabilities can be enhanced by specifically including them within the same framework for improvement that they are already using.

Capper (1990, 1992) examined some of the features of the effective school model in two studies of preschool special education settings. She reports that the effectiveness of schooling in early childhood programs for children with disabilities differs dramatically among sites, depending on socioeconomic class, location, and culture. Capper found that in classrooms providing services to children with disabilities from upper socioeconomic classes, significantly more time was spent in "intentional learning" activities and in functional, coordinated activities with clear goals related to future educational and societal environments. As the socioeconomic level of students decreased, the location of schools moved to more rural settings; and as the culture of the students changed from majority to minority, the indicators of effective schooling decreased. In her study of five school sites, the site with the fewest indicators of effective schooling was a Native American reservation setting located in a remote area. The site had the highest rates of unemployment and of individuals living in poverty, the lowest educational attainment level, and the highest minority student enrollment. Effective school indicators *not* found in the Native American reservation site included high expectations for student achievement and teacher performance (from the principal, the district, and the community), clear consensus on priorities for school or classroom goals, the ability to recruit and retain the most qualified personnel, adequate

supervision by principals, staff development opportunities, and opportunities for professional collaboration. As a result, there was little direct instructional time, a focus on administrative rather than instructional activities, and a custodial rather than humanistic relationship between teachers and students.

Furthermore, Capper (1990) found that while schools with high minority enrollment acknowledged the need to accommodate cultural differences within the school setting in a meaningful way, culture-related activities were not integrated into the curriculum. For example, at a reservation school site, Native American holidays were recognized in addition to the traditional school holidays, but teaching about them was not integrated into the curriculum. Curricular materials were also inappropriate -- materials used in a speech therapy session depicted white, middle-class, two-parent families engaged in social activities unfamiliar to the child.

Walker (1987) provides recommendations that accommodate both language and cultural difference in curriculum development for Native American children with disabilities. These include:

- identifying language abilities in first and second language;
- identifying the student's preferred learning style, including structured/unstructured, individual/group;
- identifying cultural factors relevant to the child;
- providing for individualization of instruction;
- using the child's first language to introduce concepts to young children;
- adapting curricular materials to make sure that they complement local community norms and expectations; and
- incorporating research results into planning, as research results become available.

## Instructional Methods

There is little empirical evidence supporting adoption of a set of teaching practices that are effective specifically for Native Americans with disabilities. As a result, it is not possible to recommend a specific set of strategies. It is possible, however, to refer to research and literature that support instructional approaches that address some of the educational factors relevant to Native American education and to teaching students with disabilities in school settings. This section presents factors that might be considered in designing and delivering curriculum and instructional programs in this

context. In addition, some suggestions from the literature as to how cultural factors can be accommodated in schools and in classroom practice are presented.

In a literature summary on Native American learning styles, Swisher (1991) suggests that Native Americans' culture, particularly in child-rearing practices and in patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication between adults and children, contribute to a Native learning style that is not well-suited to some of the common practices in "Anglo" education.

One suggested way of adapting schooling to Native cultures is by using so-called "discovery" methods. Among Native Americans, a self-exploratory approach is the cultural norm. In a school setting, therefore, non-interference and autonomy may be valued more than directed instruction, which may appear to the Native American child as an interference in his/her personal affairs – i.e., his/her learning tasks (Cox & Ramirez, 1981).

In Native American culture, observation is the essential tool of learning. Asking questions is not a normal part of learning in day-to-day life, but is reserved for school. Native American children learn from parents by close proximity and observation, rather than by verbal instruction; informal learning tends to be largely non-verbal. Children learn by progressively increasing participation in physical activity, rather than by verbal instruction. Learning by physical activity is also reflected in Native American children's expectation for physical movement. In general, they are accustomed to more freedom of movement than is typically permitted (Henry & Pepper, 1990).

These differences between American schooling and Native American learning styles have resulted in the placement of Native American children in situations that favor those who are highly verbal and talkative. As a rule, Native American children learn faster when the teaching style uses a concrete approach, moving from concrete to abstract, from practice to theory (Johnson, 1991).

One way to implement some of the instructional concepts described above would be to adopt cooperative learning techniques, which have been shown to be effective with many small population groups, underachieving students, and students who have mild cognitive disabilities. This approach could be conducted in informal settings, with the opportunity for freedom of physical movement. From studies of other groups, and from the characteristics observed among Native American children, the use of group problem-solving strategies at the elementary school level would seem to be a promising approach. In mathematics, using manipulatives in this setting would also be supported (Johnson, 1991; Schindler & Davison, 1985).

Another method of adapting instruction to learning styles that seems more congruent to Native American culture is the initial presentation of new information in a visual/spatial mode, rather than a verbal mode. Included in this approach are the use of metaphors, images, analogies, and symbols rather than dictionary-type definitions, which are more verbal and abstract. Other methods suggested are creative dramatics, role-playing, and visuals rather than more abstract forms of instruction such as having students construct questions (Johnson, 1991).

A cultural difference that literature suggests should be addressed in developing classroom procedures and practices is the concept of discipline and its development in the child. For most Native American people, childhood is characterized by discovering the world through experimentation and testing. Their concept of discipline is quite different from the European-oriented view; it emerges as a result of experience and the freedom to make many of one's own choices and decisions. Therefore, while discipline imposed by parents may seem to be lacking by European standards, self-discipline instead emerges earlier in the Native American child (Henry & Pepper, 1990).

Cultural differences such as these should be recognized and used as a basis for designing instructional methods that enhance the effectiveness of schooling for all Native American children. These cultural considerations are even more crucial for those children with disabilities if they interfere with academic performance (Johnson, 1991). Despite similarities among Native Americans, however, educators have to be careful not to stereotype them, as there is wide diversity among Native Americans as individuals, and among the many Native cultures (Henry & Pepper, 1990).

While recognizing that there is not a uniform "Native American culture," participants in the 1985 Symposium on Exceptional American Indian Children and Youth (Johnson & Ramirez, 1987) noted the importance of including Native American culture in every aspect of instruction. Areas where culture should be incorporated in research, planning and development include: (1) training professionals to work specifically with Native American exceptional children; (2) assessment and diagnostic methods and materials; (3) instructional methods and curricular materials; (4) programs for parents and children; (5) research on learning style; and (6) recognizing the need for equity in considerations given to other language/cultural minority students.

## Availability of Adequately Trained Personnel

There is an acute shortage of personnel qualified to provide special education services to Native American students with disabilities. This section will discuss personnel needs and programs available to address those needs.

Dr. Robert Davila, the former Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, maintained "minority students are directly and positively affected by the presence of minority teachers in the classroom. Children with disabilities from minority backgrounds need role models every bit as much as other children" (Davila, 1991). A great need exists for fully qualified special education professionals in programs for Native Americans. Rural districts typically have poor resources, low salaries, and few attractive amenities. Schools with these characteristics located on or near Native American reservations (BIA, tribal, or public) are among the last to attract qualified special education staff.

A controversial issue in educating Native American students relates to tribal uniqueness. While some individuals feel students should be educated by individuals from their own tribes, not all Native American educators support the position of "tribal

uniqueness" as it affects teaching personnel. At a symposium on Native American education held in April 1993 at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, the Native American researchers on the panel concluded that due to sufficient similarity among Native cultures (and common differences from Anglo culture), there were significant benefits in having even Native teachers from other tribes teach Native children (Swisher et al., 1993).

The shortage of trained special education professionals in BIA-operated schools is particularly acute. During school year 1990-91, the BIA employed 297 special education teachers for all disability categories, but needed to increase this number by approximately 60 percent (another 177 fully qualified teachers) to meet the needs of the Native American students with disabilities that it served. In the same year, the nation as a whole needed only 9 percent more special education teachers. In some disability categories, the shortage of special education personnel to teach Native American students is even more severe. An increase of 83 percent in personnel trained in teaching students with mental retardation is needed. Currently, the BIA has no special educators with training in teaching students with deaf-blindness or with other health impairments. There are 2 teachers trained to serve students with hearing impairments where at least 20 more are needed, and only 1 teacher trained to serve students with visual impairments where 15 more are needed. These shortages are based on personnel vacancies and on positions that are not currently filled by fully qualified staff (U.S. Department of Education, 1992). There is significant demand in the entire country for bilingual special education personnel, but the need for Native American bilingual personnel is even more severe (Baca, 1987).

Baca (1987) suggests that the desire to work with the population and the ability to work effectively with Native American parents are key elements for successful personnel. In addition, competency in developing appropriate IEPs, sensitivity to the language and culture of Native American students, the ability to teach ESL, the ability to conduct non-biased assessments, and the development and use of appropriate materials are critical.

One way to develop the competencies required for teaching Native American exceptional children is to encourage more Native Americans to become teachers. In 1989, 13 percent of the bachelor's degrees earned by Native Americans were in education. Education was the second most frequently obtained bachelor's degree for Native American women. One in three of the master's degrees awarded to Native Americans was in education (divided approximately equally between men and women), as were 39 percent of the doctorates (O'Brien, 1992). One consideration for this training is that programs at State universities may not be as effective in developing Native American special educators as programs based within Native American communities. It appears that Native Americans who attend State universities tend to accept better-paying jobs in cities and other locations rather than return to reservations. Also, most State university programs are not designed to meet the specific needs of the reservation (Baca, 1987).

Swisher et al. (1993) discussed the role of ethnicity in the training of Native American teachers. None of the Native American teachers included in their case studies of

reservation teachers had Native American faculty in their teacher preparation programs, yet all believed that having at least one would have been extremely beneficial to them. The teachers expressed their concern over the lack of indigenous teachers who could serve as role models. They felt that, in addition to serving as role models, Native American teachers are better able to communicate with Native students, regardless of whether or not the teachers and students are of the same tribe.

Some effort has gone into improving the access of Native Americans with disabilities to higher education. Dodd and Rose (1991) found that the instructors in tribally controlled colleges had adequate background and knowledge about the culture, but no background in providing instruction to Native students with disabilities. Furthermore, there were no professionals knowledgeable about learning disabilities available to teach instructors how to accommodate these students. To assist these instructors, Dodd and Rose developed a handbook with a list of explanations and instructional practices that are helpful for Native Americans students with learning disabilities at tribally controlled colleges. The suggestions in their handbook (e.g., using advance organizers, hands-on demonstrations, and cooperative learning) are noteworthy in that they do not differ from a list one might suggest to instructors of any students with learning disabilities, regardless of their cultural background or age. Wright (1992) lists many recommendations for improving the status of Native Americans participating in higher education; one of these is "proactive affirmative action to attract more Natives to become educators."

Despite such efforts, however, data confirm an extreme shortage of Native American professional educators, or those with specific training in the "sociocultural processes operating in Indian communities and classrooms." The research suggests that it is easier and more effective to provide a tribal member with "standard teacher training" than it is to teach an outsider the tribal language and culture (ERIC, 1989). Despite the identified need for professionals with a thorough understanding of Native American language and culture, a study of small, rural schools found few professional staffers who were either Native American or had this background (Vadasy et al., 1992).

This professional shortage may also account for the staffing pattern found in many BIA-operated schools. Unlike non-Native public schools, which employ State-certified professional teachers as the largest proportion of their staff (more than 53 percent), BIA-operated schools employ many more aides as full-time personnel (BIA, 1988). Although nearly all those employed as teachers are State certified, they comprise only about 17 percent of full-time education personnel. The BIA also employs approximately 1,000 "education specialists" with teaching duties included in their jobs. The ratio of aides to students is 1 to 19 in BIA schools, but 1 to 129 in public schools. This staffing pattern may occur as a result of difficulties in training, recruiting, and retaining professionals. It may also contribute to the different special education placement patterns observed in comparing BIA schools to the rest of the country.

In FY 1990, the National Advisory Council on Indian Education funded 14 applications, totaling more than $2 million, under the Educational Personnel Development Program to provide training to Native American/Alaska Native students for careers in

education. The ultimate goal of this project is to train education personnel who will serve the Native American community (NACIE, 1991).

OSEP's Division of Personnel Preparation (DPP) funds two types of projects for Native Americans. "Native American Projects" provide grants to tribal colleges to train Native Americans to serve children with disabilities. In each funded project, part of the curriculum focuses on incorporating the language and culture of Native Americans into the education of Native American students with disabilities. At least 50 percent of the trainees are Native Americans. "Projects Recruiting or Benefitting Native Americans" is for special education personnel preparation programs designed to recruit Native Americans. In the last two fiscal years, funding has been divided about equally between these two types of projects. Both types of projects cover multi-year periods, and have ranged in funding level from $48,415 per year to $143,335 per year.

Examples of new Native American Project applications funded in 1992 include:

- A grant to Northern Arizona University to train 60 students in special education at an on-site program on the Navajo Indian Reservation. The program will include classroom training in special education, training related to working effectively in rural areas, working in a collaborative model, and learning the cultural attributes of the people in the area. Training will be accomplished through regular academic work, by working in classrooms on the site, and by assignment to host families in the Native American community who will instruct students in the culture.

- A grant to the American Indian Resource Center in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, in cooperation with Northeastern State University and the Cherokee Nation, to train 26 special education teachers of Native American descent for careers as special education teachers. The program will include both academic preparation and practicum experiences focused on providing services to Native American children with disabilities.

New Projects Recruiting or Benefitting Native Americans for 1992 included an award to San Jose State University to recruit and train minority teachers to serve multicultural students with hearing impairments. This project will provide stipends to 40 students from various ethnic groups to teach students with hearing impairments and deafness. Funds will also be used to revise and expand course offerings to include multicultural issues, and to provide this information to working teachers through in-service training (U.S. Department of Education, 1992).

In addition to these projects, in 1991 DPP funded a five-year technical assistance project to develop, improve, and increase the participation of historically under-represented ethnic populations in special education training programs. Under this award, the University of New Mexico's Outreach Alliance 2000 Project collaborates with other institutions to enhance their ability to prepare successful personnel preparation-related

applications under IDEA funding, particularly for historically under-represented ethnic populations (Baker, 1992).

## SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

As this chapter reveals, there is a significant lack of research on Native American populations, including research on needs and on effective practices for Native American children with disabilities; a broader research base for the Native American population is critically needed. A literature search undertaken to prepare this chapter did not uncover a single empirical study on effective instructional practices (or other remedial or compensatory programs) for Native Americans with any type of disability. Some of the literature suggested that certain programs or practices were effective, but presented no data supporting such assertions. Another difficulty experienced in reviewing data sources for this chapter was that Native Americans were often included in an "other" race category; therefore, their educational needs and problems were undocumented. More consistency in including Native Americans as an identifiable group and better sampling methods to support group analysis are needed.

Even with these suggestions, however, it will be difficult to develop a meaningful program of research in special education for Native Americans. Differences among tribes make it difficult to generalize results. Most current studies do not differentiate results based on tribe or whether Native Americans studied resided on or off reservations. To deal with some of the challenges of developing a research program, the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force states that one of its five priorities for additional funding is to seek legislation authorizing the "establishment of a national research and school improvement center for Native education" (NACIE, 1992).

In addition to the development of a broader research base and the implementation of more consistent data collection procedures on the Native American population, additional efforts are needed to recruit, train, and employ larger numbers of *qualified* special education personnel. The term "qualified" refers to competence in special education and in working effectively with Native Americans.

Finally, there continues to be confusion and misunderstanding of various agencies' responsibilities in providing services to Native American students with disabilities. Communication of regulations and policy to all agencies involved, and procedures to assist them in collaborative and cooperative efforts are needed.

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